

Septic System Do's and Don'ts

(Adapted from <https://www.mass.gov/guides/caring-for-your-septic-system>)

**Did you know that your septic system may harm Lincoln's drinking water, wetlands, and streams?
Practice these simple steps to ensure your septic system is maintained properly:**

- Have your septic system inspected & pumped every 3-5 years. If the tank fills up with an excess of solids, the wastewater will not have enough time to settle in the tank. These excess solids will then pass on to the leach field, where they will clog the drain lines and soil.
- Know the location of the septic system and drain field, and keep a record of all inspections, pumping, and repairs. Don't know where your septic system is? Contact the Board of Health and see if they have a plan of all your septic system components on file. Keep a sketch/plan of it handy for service visits.
- Grow & maintain low-growing native plants (not trees or shrubs) above the septic system leaching field. Maintaining native vegetation is a great way to control excess runoff from rain events.
- Install water-conserving devices in faucets, showerheads, and toilets to reduce the volume of water running into the septic system. Repair dripping faucets and leaking toilets, run washing machines and dishwashers only when full, and avoid long showers.
- Divert roof drains and surface water from driveways and hillsides away from the septic system. Keep sump pumps & foundation drains away from the system.
- Take leftover hazardous chemicals to Minuteman Hazardous Products Facility for disposal. Use bleach, disinfectants, and toilet bowl cleaners sparingly.
- Use only septic system additives that are allowed for use by MassDEP: www.mass.gov/guides/septic-system-additives-allowed-for-use-under-title-5. Small amounts of standard household cleaners, drain cleansers, detergents, etc. will be diluted in the tank & should cause no damage to the system.

Don't...

- Don't use your toilet or sink as a trash can by dumping grease or non-biodegradables (cigarette butts, diapers, feminine products, etc.) down the drain. Non-biodegradables can clog the pipes, while grease can thicken and clog pipes.
- Don't put paint thinners, anti-freeze, pesticides, disinfectants, water softeners, and other strong chemicals into the system. These can cause major upsets in the septic tank by killing the biological part of your septic system and polluting the groundwater.
- Don't use a garbage grinder/disposal, which feeds into the septic tank. If you do have one in the house, severely limit its use. Adding food wastes or other solids reduces your system's capacity and increases the need to pump the septic tank. If you use a grinder, the system must be pumped more often.
- Don't plant trees within 30 feet of your system, or park/drive over any part of the system. Tree roots will clog your pipes, and heavy vehicles may cause your drain field to collapse.
- Don't allow anyone to repair or pump your system without checking that they are licensed: <https://www.mass.gov/guides/consumer-protection-tips-septic-system-inspections-and-repairs>.
- Don't run excessive laundry loads with your washing machine. Doing load after load does not allow your septic tank time to adequately treat wastes and overwhelms the entire system with excess wastewater. This will flood your drain field.
- Don't use chemical solvents to clean the plumbing or septic system. "Miracle" chemicals will kill microorganisms that consume harmful wastes. These products may cause groundwater contamination.

For more information about septic system maintenance, check out the Lincoln Board of Health Website: <https://www.lincolntown.org/116/Board-of-Health> or contact them at 781-259-2614.

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